

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Hillside**

**Elementary School Q054**

**86-02 127<sup>th</sup> Street  
Queens  
NY 11418**

**Principal: Anita Prashad**

**Dates of review: March 18 & 19, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D.**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Hillside is an elementary school with 568 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 10% Black, 49% Hispanic, 5% White, 1% Multi-Racial, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 34% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.3%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is well-developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in teaching and learning. (1.3)
  - Resources have been redirected to allow for two Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) teachers who provide mandated services to students in grades K-2 and grades 3-5. They are flexibly programmed to support students in a least restrictive environment. The co-teaching model in classrooms with Individualized Education Program (IEP) students allows for more targeted support to be extended. In addition, SETSS teachers function as coaches to the grades they service, providing guidance with Tier I strategies for teachers to strengthen support within the classroom. To address the needs of the school's growing English language learner population; the principal funded three English as a second language teachers. A Saturday English language learner Academy for students in grades 2-5 is funded with Title II funds. These students are also afforded an opportunity to attend a Tuesday/Thursday Academic Intervention Services (AIS) Academy, thereby providing them with three different opportunities for targeted support in addition to the mandated daily Extended Day tutorial. The English language learner Academy is set up with a Co-teaching model where an English as a second language teacher partners with a general education teacher to serve groups of 10 students. The teachers meet for planning before and after each Saturday session to reflect and make adjustments to instruction based on student needs. The impact of these teaching assignments is an increase in teacher accountability for the academic well-being of students with learning challenges.
  - The principal has provided each grade team three to five common planning periods per week. In addition, special education teachers in self-contained and Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes have two periods on Fridays dedicated for meetings with their general education counterparts from ICT classes and related service providers to engage in professional development. Teachers take turns presenting professional research-based articles and strategies to strengthen awareness and pedagogical practice. They also brainstorm solutions to any concerns they might have, servicing their high need group of students. In addition, the School Based Option (SBO) allows for a dedicated Thursday morning planning session each week that supports: teacher teams' instructional planning; articulation with related service providers and cluster teachers; looking at student work/student data and noting trends that inform adjustments to their practice; and professional development that is targeted to meet the specific needs of teachers. Finally, the principal has scheduled bi-weekly meetings on Tuesday mornings to support vertical articulation between Upper/Lower grade teachers and out of classroom personnel. These strategic moves, aligned to school goals have already shown improved instruction, as evidenced by: the implementation of targeted strategies; revised curriculum materials; and observation reports/teacher feedback. There is also a definite evidence of cohesion across grades and the rigorous expectations for students are clearly communicated by the sampling of student work on hallway and classroom bulletin boards across disciplines.

- The school maintains a culture that effectively conveys high expectations to teachers, students and parents thus impacting positively on student achievement. (3.4)
  - High expectations for teaching and learning are communicated by the principal through a “Daily Bulletin” which captures any safety items; school-wide events; as well as helpful prompts for staying focused on the daily implementation of best pedagogical practice linked to improved student outcomes. The Daily Quote that heads each bulletin is reflective of building community and school culture and embedded as a daily message to adults in the setting. High expectations are also conveyed through the professional library, which consists of texts aligned to teacher need as informed by classroom observations. Additionally, Lead Teacher facilitated instructional rounds are routinely scheduled through the school year and have been an ongoing practice for the last three years. The rounds consist of five-ten minute classroom visits using predetermined lens to note implementation of best practices shared at professional development sessions or through professional literature. Teachers are provided feedback in the form of “Glows and Grows”. This framework for mutual accountability has resulted in deeper impact and more pronounced enhancements of classroom environment and pedagogical practice. These initiatives ensured a shared commitment to the school’s high expectations and goals.
  - Parents receive monthly calendars, which includes instructional foci and the units of study for reading and writing for each grade. The school also distributes monthly newsletters that contain useful tips on how to best support students at home with their academic and social-emotional needs; translated versions are made available to families. In October, at Open School Evening conference, parents receive an overview of the year’s instructional goals as well as the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Benchmark Levels so parents can see the trajectory of learning goals in addition to what level their child needs to be reading at during each of the benchmark cycles through the year. A calendar of workshops is shared in the Beginning of the Year Parent packet and updated through the year. The school also has a subscription to MYON Reader that supports building reading fluency and comprehension, giving children access to over 3000 digital books, accessible from any mobile device. The program offers teachers and parents an opportunity to track a child’s progress and guide him/her in selection based on their reading levels. Teachers communicate regularly with parents through email; phone calls (logs maintained); weekly and monthly progress reports (based on individual student needs) outside of report card marking periods and face-to-face conferences. The principal has established standards for clear, succinct report card comments that also provide specific suggestions on what parents can do to support their child at home to move them towards meeting/exceeding their long-term goals, for example, “*Andrew would benefit from additional practice with multi-step problems (Student workbook,) Encourage him to explain to you the steps he took and why, in addition to having him write it out.*” Parents expressed confidence that the Principal and staff work together to afford their children the best education and access to resources. As a result, there is a consistent message to families on expectations and their role in assisting their children to advance.
- Teachers benefit from participating in professional collaborations that foster reflection as well as to improve instruction and student achievement. (4.2)

- Each grade team has been charged with identifying five to seven students, “Fab Five”/ “Super Seven”, and uses their assessment data to identify trends in student outcomes, set interim benchmarks for the targeted students, and note implications for revisions to instruction. These students reflect: those with an IEP and/or English language learner status; as well as high/mid/lower performing students who may or may not have an IEP or English language learner status. There are meeting agendas, logs and minutes to reflect the discussions and adjustments that are being made to inform daily instruction. Earlier in the school year, teacher teams reached consensus on a lesson plan template that provides coherence throughout grades and subject areas. Improvement in instructional planning is evidenced by the adjusted curriculum maps; unit plans and daily lesson plans that reflect the tiered tasks; the modifications and accommodations for various groups of students and guided instruction targets for individual students. While in curricular planning meetings, teachers jot notes in their planning documents so that during the dedicated End of Year Planning sessions, they can adjust the placement of units and make additional revisions to the two new programs (Ready GEN and Go MATH) as they prepare for the upcoming school year. These coherent practices ensure that the entire community is aware of what is being taught and its connection to the Common Core Learning Standards.
- The principal has empowered teachers to grow into leadership roles and guide their own professional development, as well as that of their colleagues. The principal also created a group of “Ambassadors”, members of the school’s Instructional Cabinet, composed of clusters, English as a second language and SETSS teachers. They are purposefully assigned matches as liaisons to the grade teams based on their content area expertise and the needs of the team in question. They act in the capacity of coaches, offering resources to support their teacher team’s efforts, while allowing for the team members to rotate responsibly. In addition to grade leaders, the school also has Lead Teachers on each grade who shares the responsibility of researching, planning and designing unit plans and lessons that are aligned to the standards and differentiated to meet the individual needs of students. This shared leadership has led to the staff taking more ownership of their professional practice and has established a school-wide culture of learning.
- The school ensures that its standards-based curriculum is purposefully modified, resulting in all learners having access to cognitively engaging tasks across grades and subjects. (1.1)
  - The school has decided to adopt the ReadyGen program for literacy to gain access to more complex text. Teacher teams work to increase rigor at the end of unit tasks by providing continued alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, addressing the English language arts shifts and implementing interdisciplinary activities. Staff receives various teaching resources from Mentoring Minds to support planning and implementation of best practices (Comprehensive Common Core Standards and Strategies Flip Chart, Critical Thinking Strategies Guide, Response to Intervention Strategies Flip Chart, English Language Learners Strategies Guide, Accommodation Wheels and Questioning Stems). Understanding by Design is used as a planning framework, which leads students toward the execution of performance, based assessments. Academic language is infused into the curricula. Planning documents show an increase in exposure to more complex text and attention is given to how text is being used in the lesson.

The principal has provided a Fountas and Pinnell kit in each classroom with a complete set of teaching resources to support guided reading practice and strategic lessons designed to support students in improving competency in literacy. The impact is reflected through the increase in cohesion across grades as evidenced by the improved quality of curriculum, maps/unit plans/lesson plans and improved communication and collaboration among teachers on and across grades. This ensures curricular coherence across grades and subjects that promote rigorous, Common Core aligned instruction.

- Teacher teams work to identify and address the varied needs of students using Response to Intervention (RTI) tiered support and the Mentoring Minds' flip chart and available resources. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies are imbedded in curricular planning documents to ensure that multiple entry points are available for students to engage in the curriculum. Lesson plans reflect the support diverse learners through the use of materials and strategies such as: slant boards, visual aids, desktop charts, highlighters post-its, anchor charts, labels, visual cues/prompts, explicit task cards, intentional grouping of students, scaffolding of academic language, conversation prompts/questions to promote deeper discussions within student groups, think-pair-share. Teachers use their conferencing notes/logs in addition to data gathered from student work samples and unit assessments to plan next steps. Conversations during a third grade teacher team meeting were focused on noticing students' improved use of academic language within their writing samples. Teachers noted students in their classes who were having scaffolds and prompts gradually faded in order to *"nurture and instill greater confidence and independence."* In subsequent lessons, students would still have a choice to access these scaffolds but within anchor charts and other resources in the classroom. Decisions were being made in collaboration with the SETSS and English as a second language teachers who provide service to those students in a co-teaching model. Such practices regarding the ongoing revision of curricula, enables all students to participate in multiple entry point instruction, which reinforce the concepts being taught.
- Instruction across the vast majority of classrooms reflects a commitment to engaging all learners in high levels of thinking that results in students who produce meaningful work products and own their learning. (1.2)
  - Across the various classrooms visited, children were engaged in purposeful groups with clear expectations around what independent work and partner or group work should look and sound like. They pointed out various tools and resources at their disposal to support them in their work. These included anchor charts; checklists; and question wheels/prompt lists. There was also the practice of having a student share out to the whole group what his/her partner had shared during small group work. During a Math lesson in a grade 3 class, students were working in groups while the teacher circulated and conferenced with individual students and jotted her notes. Some students were working with a partner in their group using fraction tiles; the push-in SETSS teacher supported others by modeling it on the overhead projector; a 1:1 Para assisted her charge as well as students in his group by asking guiding questions. The higher level group was charged with making up their own fraction problems and having a team-mate solve it. The school adheres to the Gradual Release of responsibility Model. Uniformly, implemented by teachers with new content, they model "I do", "We do, you do together", and "Now you do on your own". The teacher moves to the role of facilitator to

allow students to take increased ownership of their learning through the planned opportunities for students to talk and share. Teachers, while circulating and conducting check-ins for understanding, use prompts such as, “Help me understand why you think that.”, “When the writer said ‘ \_\_\_\_\_ ’, what did that mean?”; “Children stop for a moment. Turn and talk to your elbow partner about what you think the author meant when he said, ‘ \_\_\_\_\_ ’”. Questions and tasks routinely require students to think about what they learned, adopt a position and to provide or cite evidence to support their point of view. In one third grade class students reading the tall tale on Paul Bunyan were working to identify “Point of View”. One student shared his opinion and went back to quote from the text, the difference in the perspectives of both Paul Bunyan and his parents. In addition, student writing samples across grade and subject area showed a similar emphasis on stating a position and then supporting with text based evidence. Such practices reinforce the staff’s commitment to Common Core aligned instructional shifts as well as Danielson’s expectations involving questioning and discussion.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Extend data gathering and analysis practices to all core subjects as well as clear next steps for improvement based on specific rubrics to help students set and achieve their goals. (2.2)
  - Rubrics are task specific and aligned with the learning goals being assessed. Rubrics accompany task or assignments so that parents are also informed of expectations. Writing rubrics have been adapted from schoolwide units for writing and infused with elements from 6+1 Traits of Writing (both in use for last three years to strengthen students writing). However, with the implementation of the new ReadyGen program, teachers noted that while the Performance Based Assessments (PBA) were Common Core aligned, the task rubrics lacked sufficient rigor in assessing student work samples. So teachers have begun the work of revising the rubrics to make sure they include more specific elements aligned to the learning target and reflect more rigorous expectations. The lack of rigorous common rubrics limits the reliability of the data; preventing teachers from effectively identifying successful strategies.
  - According to the principal’s Schools Self-Evaluation Form, “students are more engaged and excited about their work and accomplishments”. This is evidenced by the conversations between teacher and student by the use of student self/peer assessments. Students reflect during the drafting process of their writing assignment, using a checklist. In math, they use the 4-Square rubric to assess their work. However, this only occurs in the upper grades and there is no self-assessment done in the final writing piece or in the rest of the core subject areas resulting in inconsistencies in sharing information, which impedes student achievement across all content areas.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Hillside	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?				<b>X</b>			
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?				<b>X</b>			
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			<b>X</b>				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?				<b>X</b>			
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				<b>X</b>			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			<b>X</b>				
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?				<b>X</b>			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				<b>X</b>			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>